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*L'organisation du travail à Bruxelles au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.* By G. DES MAREZ. Brussels: Henri Lamertin, 1904. 8vo, pp. xii + 520.

THE student of economic history has cause for delight when viewing the broad and painstaking investigations carried on for so many years, in so many languages, toward a truer valuation of city life in the past, and particularly of such leading institutions as the trade corporations or guilds. The main characteristics of these corporations have already been well defined; the study of local singularities or national modifications are now the main object of scholars in the field. The chief value of Des Marez's volume lies in his minute analysis of the history of labor organizations in Brussels during the period of the city's chief importance as a trade center. The author begins his work by making a decided distinction between the guild proper, as the earliest aristocratic association of manufacturers, with which begins the preponderance of Brussels in the cloth trade, and the later associations of individual workers and employers of labor on a limited scale, who organize in defiance of the guild and finally form the democratic faction in the city-government. The struggle which decided the victory in favor of the labor organizations was carried on very much on the same lines here as elsewhere. The old guild of drapers, in sole possession of the trade (on which all other lines of industry appear at first dependent) and of political power, overreaches its limits of just influence and antagonizes the individual workers by treating them as its menials. The latter by repulsion learn the value of combination, and by force of numbers finally effect their eventual release from industrial and political tutelage, even compelling the guild to join their party, and thus securing stability of the new order. The next stage in the development is that the organizations become in their turn employers, and enter the struggle for industrial monopoly as against individual and outside competition. They attempt to outwit the repeated effort of capital or influence to get more than the apportioned share of profit, and maintain jealously the dead level of mediocrity in every branch of industry, besides exploiting successfully the inferior and weaker elements within their own ranks. This is the stage which usually succeeds the triumph of the new order over the old and precedes the next—the formation of protective unions among the wage-earners, which is likely to end in general loss of trade and uniform poverty. This stage seems not yet reached.

in Brussels at the period under discussion. Instead, we find the premature signs of the decay of trade, and the frantic efforts of town industry to exclude all outside competition and make war on labor, which is but the beginning of final stagnation and financial disaster.

Interwoven with this general outline of conditions, the author gives in a number of sections a detailed account of the life of the artisan in its various phases; of the jurisdiction of the guild and the corporations respectively, showing the original vast difference between the two; of the rules governing production and sales, which often give the impression of an almost pathetic anxiety on the part of the administrative bodies that, whatever happens to the producer, the consumer at least shall not suffer; and, finally, of the participation of the trades in the government of the city and in charities, some parts of which seem the immediate prototypes of our own administrative councils and relief organizations.

The author brings forth, with much clearness the fact that originally at least, there was no intermediate stage between apprentice and master; the journeyman was simply one who might be master if he chose, but whom poverty usually forced back into the ranks of the wage-earners. As the admission fee to the rank of master-artisan was raised, partly to supply funds for a needy treasury and partly to assist in making the trades ever more exclusively a possession of certain families only, the apprentice without means to purchase his release saw the door of freedom of industry shut in his face. In this and other cases the author might have obliged us by giving at least the approximate value in modern money of the sum demanded. The grouping of the corporations into larger units called nations, and the presenting of a certain number of candidates from each for membership in the city government, is another point of interest. The question lately agitated by some of those interested in the economic situation of the period, notably Bücher, in regard to the gradual evolution of manual industry from *Lohnwerk* to *Kaufwerk* or rather *Preiswerk* (if we have correctly understood the German terminology), the author refutes as too little borne out by facts (chap. 4, sec. 1 and p. 217). In his opinion the terms cannot be separated; the artisan is at once *Lohnwerker* and *Prieswerker*. The existence, too, as early as the fifteenth century of merchants on a large scale, as distinct from retail dealers, lately brought forward as an economic *Lehrsatz* by certain writers, meets with his disapproval. As far as Brussels was concerned, the two were one:

the retail merchant might easily in his relations with other towns or foreign commerce be a dealer *en gros* (pp. 325-37). The hostility of the corporations to combination of any kind is aptly illustrated by the fact that a town merchant could not associate himself with an outside dealer for the purpose, for example, of importing or selling fish in the city (p. 342). In order to limit production, every man had to work under his own roof (p. 210), thereby facilitating inspection of his output. This onerous regulation doubtless had its ideal side, since the corporation sought to secure the chance of a living for everyone, and the active and aggressive man of talent or means might too easily drive others out of business in an age where all occupation was stationary, and nothing but the street or beggary was left to the unfortunate unable to hold his own. Hence protection had its benevolent and philanthropic as well as its narrow and fatal side, and modern economics has come to the point where it hesitates to condemn what it once scorned.

The device of the trades, "*Bon nom vaut mieux que richesse*," was generally not lived up to; hence the regulation of sales to the minutest detail. The myriad of prohibitive rules hampered trade; and yet our city fathers of today find it necessary to look into adulterations of food, and diminish the chance of speculation in public ignorance. In case of limited supply, the question of cheapness had necessarily to overshadow that of excellence; hence dealers in drinks, meat, and fish were enjoined to signify by means of little flags of different color the quality of their products, and the manufacturer had to place his individual stamp on every piece of goods coming from his workshop. The excises so greatly in vogue as a means of filling the town chest make the reader wonder how the producer managed to live, and must have been a school in practical economy, or rather penury, such as few communities nowadays find necessary. Yet the presence of brokers and middlemen in the large *halles* or bazaars decidedly suggests the large trade. The burden of practical and sentimental duties placed on the individual member of the corporation, particularly on the master-artisan, seems sufficiently heavy to explain his hard bargaining with his workmen, and creates the final impression of life in the city as a battle to the knife, leaving little or no quarter.

Des Marez's volume in its entirety is an excellent contribution, and gives by far the most exact and at the same time general account of an important period in the development of the trades. It may

with profit be used as foundation for comparative studies of the guilds in other places. It supplies a number of points not explained or much touched upon in Levasseur's exhaustive study, and should be found in every well-equipped library.

A. M. W.

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*La petite industrie contemporaine.* By VICTOR BRANTS. Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1902. 8vo, pp. viii + 230.

AS ONE of the volumes in a series on social economy, Professor Brants finds the scope of his present work on *La petite industrie contemporaine* strictly bounded by the fields assigned to his fellow writers. He has to deal with small industries proper as distinguished from agriculture; with industries, not incomes; with one aspect only of the middle classes of the present day. Some closely related subjects—as apprenticeship and technical education—are in other hands. With these limitations made clear—and the regret may be expressed in passing that the author curtails his space by so often recurring to these restrictions—M. Brants proceeds to set apart the small industry from the great by the essential question: “To whom belongs the direction, does it remain united to manual labor, or is it separated from it?” To this he adds a second deemed of equal social importance: “In what measure is labor united to capital, or is it separated from it?” Thence he sets out to learn whether the industrial transformation, the encroachment of the great industry, be as widespread as is sometimes claimed, whether its inroads be regular and general, at what cost the change is wrought, the character and number of the victims, and their claims to help and preservation. He reviews conditions and opinions in the European states where he finds these questions most stirring in Germany, Austria—whither he made three journeys for investigation—France, and his own country, Belgium. He studies his problem in the light of government statistics and of contemporaneous inquiry as well as through his own personal observation, and affords some compensation for his necessary *lacunae* in numerous references to recent works bearing upon certain phases of his subject.

It is needless to say that centralization and competition are found to stand in the forefront of the dangers threatening the small producer and the small dealer. Yet while granting frankly